

# Catch and Release or Catch and Keep?

Many anglers believe the best way to ensure good fishing is to release every fish caught. While this may be true in some instances, it does not apply everywhere and in some cases may actually be counterproductive to good fish management.

Idaho's fisheries are managed with a variety of rules designed to provide diverse recreational opportunity. There are places to catch (and mostly release) large fish and other waters that provide high

catch and harvest rates. Still other areas are stocked with catchable-sized trout intended specifically for anglers to take home and eat.

Fishing regulations help protect fish populations from overharvest. Fish managers place bag or size limits on fish populations that cannot withstand heavy harvest. Abundant fish populations require less restrictive rules including six-fish limits or unlimited harvest.

## Catch and Keep

Most species of Idaho gamefish are excellent eating if cared for properly. Please use fish resources wisely; keep only fish that you will use and release the rest.

- **Plan ahead.** If you intend to keep fish for eating, bring a proper storage container.
- **Get fish cleaned and on ice** as soon as possible, especially trout. Remember to leave the head and tail attached during the trip home.
- **Warm water fish** can be kept in a live well or on a stringer until you are done fishing.



Rob Perkins

## Catch and Release

Although many fish are hardy and can be caught and released numerous times, fish survival increases with these proper handling and release techniques.

- **Use barbless hooks** to make releasing fish easier.
- **Land fish quickly** to minimize undue stress, especially in warmer water.
- **Leave hooked fish in the water** if possible. Never hold a fish by the gills. Support the belly to avoid injuring internal organs.
- **For lip-hooked fish**, hold the hook shank with a pair of pliers and pull the hook backwards with a gentle shake. If the fish is hooked more securely, wet one hand to gently grip the fish. Back the hook out with your fingers or pliers.
- **If the hook is swallowed**, cut the line as close to the hook as possible and release the fish. Most hooks will dissolve within a few weeks.



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